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LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL ARTS AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY STUDY LAUNCHED

*Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership, Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie
County, AmeriCorps to partner with Americans for the Arts*

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership (ENRP), Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County, and Americorps today announced participation in Americans for the Arts' second National Arts and Economic Prosperity Study. Over 175 cultural organizations in the two counties and their audiences will be surveyed over the next year to determine the economic impact of the arts and culture industry in the region.

Americans for the Arts has enlisted more than 100 communities across the country to participate in the study to be conducted during 2006 and presented in June, 2007. The project economists from the Georgia Institute of Technology will customize input/output analysis models for each of the communities to provide specific and reliable economic impact data about their nonprofit arts industry.

"The arts provide the key to economic development while still being true to their fundamental purpose: to delight, to inspire, to portray, and to provoke," stated Robert L. Lynch, president & CEO of Americans for the Arts. "The arts are vital to our nation's economy and this research is essential in our efforts to advance the arts in America."

The arts and culture industry is just as important at the local level. "As we develop a regional economic development strategy for Erie and Niagara Counties, we have identified tourism as one of our growth clusters," said James Allen, executive director of the Amherst Industrial Development Agency and a member of ENRP. "The arts and culture industry needs to be viewed as an economic development sector."

The Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County secured participation of the region in the study. "As funding for the arts gets cut further and further, we need to be able to justify the importance of arts and culture to this community and its economy," Arts Council Executive Director and ENRP member Celeste Lawson explained. "We convinced Americans for the Arts to waive its participation fee (\$6,000 per county) because of the importance and uniqueness of the cultural sector in our area."

"ENRP is about partnerships, and this project is a perfect example of what we do," ENRP Co-Chair and Niagara County Legislature Vice-Chair Clyde Burmaster said. ENRP Co-Chair and Erie County Legislature Minority Leader Barry Weinstein, MD agreed, saying "ENRP has long been focused on improving the region's economic development infrastructure, and the results gained from this project will enable us to make informed decisions about the arts' place in our economy."

Formed in 1998, the Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership (ENRP) is an ad hoc subcommittee of the Niagara and Erie County Legislatures in partnership with multiple levels of government and other private and non-profit agencies. ENRP is a non-traditional regional collaborative forum for linking multiple organizations and initiatives, and also serves as a catalyst to identify and pursue opportunities to grow the region. ENRP – through its Tourism & Culture Subcommittee – will act as a local steering committee for the study.

AmeriCorps plays an important part in the project through allocation of Americorps members to assist in the collection of the audience surveys. "AmeriCorps is glad to assist in this collaborative effort," said Mark Lazzara, Executive Director, West Seneca Youth Bureau, AmeriCorps. "Being able to help articulate the positive impact of non-profit institutions on our local economy is high on the agenda of our organization; AmeriCorps is driven by a mission of service and assistance to local non-profits."

Upon completion of the study all local participants will receive a copy of the final report, and it will be distributed to government officials as well.